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ABSTRACT

Several practical suggestions or guidelines for deriving objectives in traditionally difficult curriculum areas (written and oral communication, fine arts, social sciences, and humanities) are presented in this paper. The author believes that educators do not know how well they can define important, teachable objectives in these areas until they try. The guidelines include: (1) if you merely want to provide the learner with "nice to know" information or content, rather than to teach a skill that the learner can apply in many situations, then you probably do not need objectives anyway; (2) when deriving objectives, it is useful to consider the basic stages a real writer, artist, or actor goes through to come up with a good performance or product and develop a scheme for each stage; (3) objectives should be written so that they define the essential elements or characteristics of a product or performance in a clear, recognizable way; (4) it is helpful to first develop actual samples of the product or performance you want the learner to accomplish; (5) when considering objectives for school-based programs particularly, one must recognize that schools must limit objectives to the time that is available; and (6) objectives can be substantially improved through the curriculum developer's attempts to teach objectives, either personally or through products. Examples of objectives in four areas and a structure of an advanced expressive language program are given in the appendixes. (SK)

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DERIVING OBJECTIVES IN DIFFICULT-TO-DEFINE CURRICULAR AREAS

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Over the years there have been many criticisms voiced and alternatives suggested to Tyler's approach of behaviorally defining one's curricular intents in the form of learner objectives. One of the most frequent objections is that while objectives can be derived relatively easily in some curricular areas (arithmetic, decoding in reading, spelling, for example), they are elusive and difficult to define in other areas (for example, written and oral communication, the fine arts the social sciences, the humarities).

The point of view in this paper, however, is that we really don't know how well we can define important, teachable objectives in these areas until we really try. It would seem that many of those who despair at deriving such objectives may not have been able or willing to really invest the considerable time and energy required for such a task. Where other curriculum developers have persisted in trying to operationalize objectives in difficult areas, the results appear fruitful and much has been learned about the process (Scott, et al., 1975; Quellmalz, et. al., 1973).

The remainder of this summary identifies and describes several practical suggestions or guidelines for deriving objectives in traditionally difficult curriculum areas. The guidelines evolved primarily from applying the Tyler Rationale while developing nationally distributed

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instructional systems during the past seven years at SWRL, an NIE-sponsored educational research and development Laboratory.

1. Focus on skills. If you merely want to provide the learner with "nice-to-know" information or content (for example, information about food processing), rather than to teach a skill that the learner can apply in many situations (for example, how to select balanced meals), then you probably don't need objectives anyway. Just give the learner the information in traditional text or lecture form. When seriously deriving objectives, however, the most important questions to keep in mind is "What do I want the learner to be able to do?" (Taxonomies can be useful at times in helping to answer this question, but they should never replace it. It is nonsense, for example, to map out a "content domain" and then, in a robot-like fashion, proceed to list six objectives, one for each category in the Bloom Taxonomy, for each concept.) Examples of "do" type objectives in relatively difficult areas as composition, oral language, nutrition, and personal growth are found in Appendix A.

2. Structure objectives around performance stages. When deriving objectives, it has been found useful to consider the basic stages a real writer, artist, actor, or whatever goes through to come up with a "good" performance or product. A writer, for example, usually plans a composition, then composes or writes it, and, finally, edits and revises it. By thinking of the entire process, rather than just, say, the writing stage, the developer's resulting objectives are less likely to be too narrow and restrictive (as is actually the case with most composition curricula available to schools today). At SWRL, formulation of objectives and instructional development is being conducted in a number of other

traditional, but difficult-to-define, elementary-school curricular areas. Similar stages have been defined for curricula in oral expression through dramatics and public speaking, advanced reading (including comprehension and study skills), music, and art. In oral expression, for example, the stages of plan, perform, and criticize are analogous to the stages of plan, write and edit/revise in composition.

When organizing objectives within each stage, many schemes may be used. In composition, the planning objectives can be organized around the various types of discourse (for example, fiction, descriptions, directions, news articles, persuasions). The planning objectives attempt to define the substance or content for each particular type of discourse (for example, The student's story will have the characters create and carry out a solution to the conflict or problem that is clever, and not obvious or stereotyped). The planning objectives for oral expression might be organized around the familiar contexts of improvisation, dramatic interpretation, play production, and public speaking.

Whereas objectives from the planning stage tend to define <u>what</u> the writer or performer wishes to say or do, outcomes in the writing and performing stages tend to define <u>how</u> the particular composition is written or <u>how</u> the improvisation, play or speech is performed. In the oral expression area, the performing outcomes are organized around such areas as non-verbal expression, vocal expression, and delivery and presence. In composition, the writing outcomes focus on stylistic aspects.

Editing/revising objectives and criticizing objectives (the evaluative stage) focus on the learner's abilities to recognize products or performances that meet the objectives from the planning and writing/performing stages, and the learner's ability to correct any deficiencies. Objectives in this latter evaluative stage are all too often overlooked or ignored during the derivation of objectives in curriculum development.

Appendix B illustrates an outcome architecture for an upper-elementary oral language curriculum.

3. Clearly define qualitative criteria. Objectives should be written such that they define the essential elements or characteristics of a product or performance in a clear, recognizable way. Another very important question to ask during the formulation of objectives is "How will I know if what the learner does or produces is adequate or 'good'?" For example, rather than say, "The student will read scripted lines well," you would want to define what "well" means in a way that curriculum developers, teachers, and students could easily understand and recognize--perhaps, "Reads scripted lines in a natural manner, so as to sound like the performer is speaking rather than reading."

Often this is the most difficult, yet important, aspect of deriving objectives. It takes a lot of time, effort, and experience with both the subject matter and the learners to be able to clearly state just what constitutes a "good" story or a "good" persuasive talk. However, once objectives contain these defining criteria, they are extremely valuable. Developers and teachers are clear about what information to provide

learners and what tasks to have learners practice. Both teachers and learners will have a clear indication of what to look for during instruction, and what to do to modify and improve inadequate performances or products.

Note that the criteria described here for objectives do not include the traditional notion of percentage standards. For example, ("80 percent of the learners will . . . at the 95 percent level"). These are of little or no help in identifying the essential quality-referenced characteristics of a product performance.

4. Develop examples of desired products or performances. When deriving objectives it is helpful to first develop actual samples of the product or the performance you want the learner to accomplish. For example, copies of the short story or other type of composition you want the learner to be able to write, tape recordings and scripts of the story or film reviews you want the learner to orally present. Then you can study these examples to decide (1) if they're really what you want the learner to do or produce and (2) what the precise elements or characteristics are that make the examples adequate or "good." This makes it easier to define clear, complete objectives, and to formulate and sequence instructional activities. Otherwise, you often waste considerable time and effort attempting to develop instruction before saying, "Well, what I really want the learner to do is . . . ."

5. Be realistic. A third very important question to ask when formulating objectives is "Is this a skill that is really important or useful to the learner?" Not everything can be taught. When considering objectives for school-based programs particularly, one must recognize that there is only so much time in the school day and year, and that

schools have to make decisions as to what to teach. Thus, while an artist, mathematician, or writer might like to include an unlimited number of objectives in the curriculum, this simply may not be realistic in terms of what can and will really be accomplished in the schools.

6. Try to teach your objective. It would be highly unusual if a set of objectives could not be substantially improved through the curriculum developer's attempts to teach the objectives, either personally or through products. The testing of objectives-referenced instruction not only results in suggestions for revisions of the instructional materials and procedures, but often of the objectives themselves. Many examples can be provided to show how objectives were refined, discarded, or replaced on the basis of actually working with the instructional aspects of the curriculum (see, for example, Scott, et al., 1975 or Niedermeyer and Oliver, 1972).

While alternative approaches to curriculum development should be explored and may prove fruitful, the objectives-based approach cannot simply be discarded as "too difficult" or "inappropriate." Large-scale evaluation studies are beginning to appear that show how instructional programs resulting from the type of objectives described here can be very potent in helping schools effect learning, regardless of the students' hereditary and socio-economic backgrounds (Hanson and Schutz, 1975; Niedermeyer, 1973; Niedermeyer and Moncrief, 1975; Klein and Niedermeyer, 1971). Derivation of such objectives, however, requires a tremendous amount of time, effort, and hands-on experience, particularly in traditionally difficult-to-define cognitive areas. Hopefully, the examples and guidelines presented here will be helpful in furthering the technology base needed for this curricular endeavor.

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APPENDIX A

Examples of Objectives in Difficult-to-Define Areas

Primary-Grade Oral Language (Dramatics)

- Creates and uses appropriate actions, movements, facial expressions, and dialogue when called for or implied in an improvisation story.
- Uses vocal expression to convey feelings or moods when reading dialogue lines.
- Creates a story ending that resolves a given story problem without running on and on.
- Gives persuasive talks that provide at least two important, observable consequences of following the particular course of action.

Upper-Elementary Composition

- Plans and writes, from notes, a complete scene description that includes observations from a variety of sensory categories, and enough precisely-worded details and comparisons to create a clear sensory impression.
- Edits and rewrites for sentence clarity, i.e., unnecessarily wordy constructions; ambiguous pronoun references; missing word phrases, words, or word parts.
- For a given story outline (plot, setting, characters list), writes an original story beginning that clearly tells who the main characters are, what they look like, how they feel, and what they want or need.
- Writes or edits a poem so as to contain characteristic features of the quatrain form, i.e., 4-line stanza (may be more than one stanza); presence of end-rhyme (a variety of rhyme patterns are possible); and word choices that are appropriate in meaning, tonal quality, and rhythmic pattern.

Nutrition Education (Teenagers and Adults)

- Classifies individual foods into the Four Food Groups (Milk, Meat, Vegetable-Fruit, Bread-Cereal).
- Determines the number of servings in a variety of foods from each food group.

- Determines whether the foods in a given list of foods eaten during a day meet nutritional requirements and, if not, lists the additional servings needed from each food group to meet requirements.

- Given a restaurant menu, a list of the foods eaten before dinner time, and a total cost limit, selects dinner orders that are within the cost limit and provide the remaining nutritional requirements for the day.

Personal and Interpersonal Growth (Teenagers and Adults)

- Identify and list ways I avoid confronting or dealing with problems or feelings in my life (e.g., watch tv, sleep, be angry, tune out, etc.).

- Describe my physical, intellectual, and emotional image of myself in ways that match the perceptions of others in my universe.

- Take risks (particularly risk disapproval) by "checking out" fears, doubts, and unknowns regarding self and others, i.e., ask for feedback or information; experience rather than avoid.

- Give up having to be "right" all of the time, particularly when it means I "lose" whatever it is I really want to "win"; allow others to be "right" at times.

APPENDIX B

Structure of the Advanced Expressive Language Program

SKILL AREAS	ACTIVITY AREAS	ASSESSMENT AREAS
Plans (Creates)	**Pantomimes** • Basic body movements and actions • Illusions • Emotions • Prepared skits • Original characters and skits	**Nonverbal Expression** Technique: • Uses stylized, representational body movements • Maintains illusionary qualities of size, weight, location, shape • Uses facial expressions to convey emotion • Maintains gestures, expressions and movements throughout a characterization • Looks at audience or other performers, as required • Follows stage directions accurately Content: • Invents expressions and actions that interpret a given storyline • Invents and performs illusions and artifacts of a setting • Creates and pantomimes a complete story including characters(s) and situation • Plans and notes stage movements appropriate to characters and scenes • Plans and creates sets, costumes and sound effects for a play
Performs (Presents)	**Improvisations** • Single lines for characters • Short speeches for characters • Unfinished social situations • Dialogue and action for given characters and situations • Dialogue and action for given characters only • Complete impromtu scenes	
Evaluates (Analyzes, Criticizes, Reviews)	**Talks** • Reviews and summaries • Introductions • Presentations • Announcements • Interviews • Discussions • Debate arguments and rebuttals	**Verbal Expression** Technique: • Uses voice to communicate mood or feelings • Uses voice qualities that are suitable for a characterization • Maintains or adjusts throughout a performance voice qualities appropriate to a characterization • Speaks clearly and loudly enough to be heard by an audience • Reads or delivers lines in a fluent, conversational manner • Speaks from notes or script fluently, without seeming to read • Delivers debate arguments and rebuttals in a clear, convincing voice • Scripts plays using clear format
	Dramatic Reading and Play Production • Single lines • Passages • Short scenes from plays • Scripted plays • Director, set designer, costume designer, stage manager roles • Stories to be scripted and performed	Content: • Creates dialogue suitable to a character and situation • Plans and delivers talks that include all prescribed information (announcement, introduction, explanation, etc.) • Plans and delivers valid debate arguments and rebuttals • Plans and delivers summaries and reviews that include all required information • Contributes original ideas to a discussion • Modifies speech in a discussion, interview or improvisation so as to demonstrate interaction with and attention to other performers or discussants • Plans and asks interview questions that are interesting, encouraging and not repetitious • As performer, designer or manager of a play, plans and makes notes for stage direction, rehearsal checklists and dialogue • Plans script and stage directions from given stories and improvisations • Creates characters and stories for mimes, improvisations, and plays